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# VOICE FUNDAMENTALS

HAROLD HURLBUT

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# VOICE FUNDAMENTALS

## HAROLD HURLBUT

The Singer is Merely the  
Channel for Vocal Expression  
Not the Source



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New York

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This little book is dedicated to my  
dear friend, Giuseppe Campanari,  
who, for so many years upheld the  
ideals of the Old Italian School at  
the Metropolitan Opera, during the  
Golden Age of Song

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## CHAPTER I.

## Introductory.

The principles advocated in the following pages are not the "method" of the Italians, the Germans or the French, nor of any other race of singers. The writer does not believe that the myriads of different vocal problems can be solved by any stereotyped "method."

Voice Training is a matter of Diagnosis and Treatment. However, there does exist a System of Fundamentals that is absolutely essential to correct singing.

Mental Vision plays a leading part in the study of the fundamentals of singing, and a mental vision that should be retained at all times by the singer who is following the suggestions in this book, is that of **blowing the tone** rather than that of singing it; and the vision or thought by the singer of being

the **channel for the tone** rather than that of being its source or producer.

The aim of this work is to eliminate to the utmost the "chaff," or wordy non-essentials, and to present to the student the kernel of the grain—the necessary fundamentals of voice production. All reiterations are made for the purpose of emphasis.

The four absolute essentials or fundamentals of voice development are, Breath Support and Control—Open Throat—Tone Placement—Vowel Formation.

## CHAPTER II.

## Breath Support and Control.

Before beginning the practice of breathing exercises, the correct position of the body should be assumed. The position of the body is a highly important factor in singing that is frequently overlooked.

The body should be in an erect position, the chest elevated, but not tensely forced up. Before inhalation the abdomen should be flat. The shoulders should be dropped loosely into their **natural** position, **never forced back**. The trunk should incline very slightly forward from the hips, to avoid a swayed back, which causes a protruding and inflexible abdomen. The head should be erect, the chin neither tilted up nor drawn in too far against the neck. A sensation of freedom and alertness of body should predominate.

The foundation of the tone is breathing. If the breath is emitted fitfully, or in a jerky fashion the tone will be fitful, jerky and given over to the vicious habit of tremolo. The principal cause of this is the sinking of chest and ribs, during the emission of tone, thus placing a resisting weight on the rising diaphragm of from ten to fifteen pounds or more, during each phrase. This downward pressure on the diaphragm, in the case of all "upper-chest" breathers, is singularly persistent, especially during the latter part of each phrase, causing an unnecessary tension and resultant quivering of the diaphragm.

During inhalation, this weight must be raised again, as the lungs expand, and if the breath be taken in quickly, a noticeable gasping sound is heard. The raising and lowering of a ten or fifteen-pound burden during a song, by the diaphragm, naturally causes a serious interference with its normal

function of supporting and controlling the breath column.

To avoid this, the "high-chest" position (not too exaggerated) must be developed. The muscles of the chest will then keep the unnecessary burden off of the lungs, and the diaphragm can utilize its powers exclusively for support and control. With the fixed "high-chest," the singer has a constant and uniform column of air supported and impelled from below, instead of an air column, cramped by a collapsing chest, the consequence of which is a trembling tone imperfectly supported by a restrained and quivering diaphragm.

To gain the "high-chest" position, stand erect (but **never** swayed back), tilting the body ever so slightly forward from the hips. (Remember that a swayed back means a protruded abdomen.) Press the tips of the fingers on the front of the abdomen at the

waist line, somewhat below the end of the breast bone (about three or four inches). Exhale so that the lungs are well emptied. Then, with the aid of the muscles nature has given you, and **without inhaling**, but with the lungs **still empty**, carefully draw in the abdomen and raise the chest, taking pains to see that you do not throw back the shoulders. Such an action by itself may appear difficult, but if you knew you were about to fasten a very tight belt about your waist, you could perform this action without trouble.

With the abdomen drawn in and the chest elevated, the fixed "high-chest" position has been assumed. This **position of the chest** must be maintained at all times, whether you are singing or speaking, walking or riding. Slowly inhale, keeping the chest in this fixed position, and as you inhale the abdominal wall at the waist line

will slowly expand against the tips of your fingers. This expansion will extend itself in a less marked degree to the sides of the abdomen at the waist line, and even slightly to the back at the waist line and somewhat above. The lower part of the abdomen should remain fairly quiet and held back, and should not drop as the upper abdomen expands. Exhale, keeping the chest always erect, and the abdomen will be drawn in.

Repeat the quiet inhalation and exhalation, maintaining the fixed "high-chest," ten times, and then rest. This exercise should not be over-indulged in. A few times daily, until the "high-chest" position has become habitual, will suffice.

Next comes the exercise of "blowing" to give the student the **mental vision** of the air column impelled by the diaphragm. Inhale, and with the lips rounded and **loose**, in the form of the sound "oo" (as in "Cool"),

blow quietly and firmly. (Always avoid actions of a flabby or aimless nature.) During the blowing exercise, be sure that the abdomen collapses at the waist line during exhalation, and expands during inhalation, and that the **chest remains high and quiet**, but not pushed or cramped into a tight or tense position. (Avoid straining of every sort.)

After the "blowing" exercise comes "blowing the tone." As before, blow, with the mouth in the "oo" position, slowly and firmly, and when the breath is coming freely, and is half-expended, sing a tone. Thus, in the first half of one exhalation, the breath only is emitted, while in the last half of the same exhalation the student is singing "oo." See that the diaphragm region (viz., the abdominal wall) and chest, act as described above, both when the breath is merely blowing, and when it is converted

into tone. Let the thought constantly be that of "blowing the tone."

The writer is a believer in frequent intervals of rest, during both lessons and practice periods. Work a few minutes—then rest a short time—then work again. These rest periods give the muscles an opportunity for recuperation and prevent fatigue.

These "blowing" exercises are not merely preliminary exercises. They should be practiced daily throughout the singer's career.

Although the visible action of the upper abdomen is a horizontal expansion and contraction, this action is really the indirect result of the action of the diaphragm. The diaphragm controls the breath from below the lungs, and the **mental vision** of the breath column as it is impelled vertically by the diaphragm, should be cultivated by the student.

## CHAPTER III.

**The Open Throat.**

The throat responds with remarkable facility to thought influence. Therefore it is inadvisable to direct too much thought toward it. Some scientists claim that, by concentrating thought on the back of the hand, one can raise a blister there. Whether this is true or not, the fact remains that sensation can be induced in any part of the body by thought concentration. Therefore when the teacher says, "Open your throat," or, "Don't tighten your throat," the student is at once conscious of that part of the body, and an involuntary, and usually detrimental muscular action results. The singer should be unconscious of the fact that he has a throat.

**Mental Vision** is very essential in acquiring an open throat. Get the mental vision

of a column of air impelled by the diaphragm, and flowing through the whole vocal mechanism, treating the mechanism itself merely as a **channel for the breath column**. Above all things, do not direct the thought to the throat. Imagine the mouth to be a great, vibratory chamber and feel that the tone is resounding through, and filling a great resonant space (viz., the mouth) of **its own accord**. Never force this resonance or attempt to gain resonance, by muscular tension.

**A free tongue** is also very essential to an open throat. In all vocal exercises, see that the tip of the tongue **rests** lightly against the lower teeth, except, of course, where it is used in the formation of consonants; (after the consonant has been pronounced, the tongue should drop into its natural position, with the tip against the lower teeth). The back of the tongue should have free play.

On the dark sounds of "ah" and "oh" it is naturally in a lower position than on the bright sounds "ee" and "ay" (as in "say"). **Never** attempt to flatten the tongue or to force it down at the back.

**The smiling expression** of the face has a decided influence in keeping the throat free. If not exaggerated, it gives expression to the face, and it is a well known fact that tones are more beautiful and more freely produced when the expression is alert, than when the face is flabby and expressionless. In the latter case the throat frequently performs its unlawful work.

**A loose lower jaw** must be acquired to gain a free throat. In practicing exercises, especially on syllables, see that the jaw is **dropped** (not forced) down, in a free manner. In the middle part of the voice, the student should not be afraid to open the

mouth wide. Never force the mouth open, but rather let it open wide. To loosen the lower jaw, practice "blowing" a light tone in the medium voice, and at the same time move the jaw freely up and down, and from side to side. At first it will be difficult to "blow" a tone and move the jaw freely, but, after some days, this will become easy. Practice this only a short time—in fact, but a very little each day.

Two absolute essentials to a free throat are a firm breath support, and a proper formation of the vowels. If the tone is not properly supported by the breath, the throat will contract in an effort to support the tone. And if syllables are not pronounced by the organs of diction (viz., the lips, assisted in a natural manner by the tongue), the throat will contract in an effort to assist in enunciation. This latter subject will be dealt with more fully, in a later chapter.

## CHAPTER IV.

## Tone Placement.

**“Placing” the tone** is mentally directing it. To get the voice to sound and ring in the right place is the problem of placement. Each tone should float (as it were) in its individual element. Associated with tone placement we find the much-discussed problem of registers.

**A vocal register** is a series of tones of different pitch, produced by approximately the same adjustment of the vocal mechanism. In reality, every separate tone is produced in its own register or adjustment of mechanism. The recognition of registers in this book is but the first step in the process of showing how to eliminate their boundary marks (viz., the breaks between the registers) so that the singer's public may not recognize them. A thorough understanding of regis-

ters, by the teacher, is the primary essential to their perfect blending.

Registers exist in the voices of animals. When a horse neighs his voice starts in the upper register and breaks into the lower, and in the bellowing of cattle the process is reversed, the voice starting in the lower register and breaking into the upper.

Manuel Garcia, the famous teacher of Jenny Lind, held that there are three registers used by women in singing, Chest, Medium, and Head, and two commonly used by men, Chest and Medium.

To sing a high tone with the adjustment of the lower register, is to force the voice, which will result, eventually, in its loss. On the other hand, to carry the adjustment of the higher registers too far down the scale, induces a flabby and characterless tone.

Flattening on the upper tones, especially on those tones that lie just above the "break"

in the voice, is usually the result of a forced-up lower register. A young soprano, who suffered, or, rather, whose hearers suffered from this fault in her singing, practically eliminated it in a month by the judicious use of the head register, which her teacher made her carry down the scale two full tones below the location of the "break": viz., to and including C-sharp of the third space.

#### Women's Voices.

The registers in soprano voices extend, approximately, as follows: The lowest, or chest register (ascending the scale) ends on E or F (first line or first space of the treble clef). Above this is the middle register, ending on the E of the fourth space, or the F of the top line. Above this is the head register. These boundaries vary slightly, rarely being higher, but more often being somewhat lower than these limits. In mezzo-

soprano and contralto voices, the boundaries of the registers are approximately a major third lower than in sopranos. However, there is no fixed rule as to registers and no voice should be forced into conformity with a fixed rule.

The first exercise in training women's voices should be confined to the middle register. After having acquired the fixed "high-chest" and the free use of the diaphragm, single tones should be "blown" lightly but firmly, on "oo" (as in "cool"). Then combine "oo" with "ee" (as in "feed"). "Blow" both vowel sounds on one breath, "oo-ee," "oo-ee," "oo-ee," repeating them several times, and blending one sound into the other. Avoid all jerking motions of the lips.

Strive for ease and freedom of emission, treating the vocal mechanism as a **channel for the breath column**.

After a short time, add to the exercises above, short scales, ascending to the third and back, then to the fourth and back, then to the fifth and so on. Sing the scales on "oo," and "oo-ee," entirely within the easy confines of the middle register. As the voice develops strength in this part, mentally picture the tones resonating **through** the mouth space, imagine this space to be vast and resonant, and **enjoy** what you are doing. Never attempt to **force resonance**, by physical tension or exertion.

In this register the air column passes directly through the mouth.

Next, comes the adjustment for the head voice. In singing head tones, the breath column no longer is confined to the mouth, but part of it flows upward, back of the soft palate into the nasal cavity. To insure the slight dropping of the soft palate, so that there may be a space behind it through which

the breath may pass into the nasal cavity, short scales on syllables ending in the consonant combination "ng" should be sung. The soft palate drops with a forward motion when "ng" is sung. The best syllables are "ang" (as in "hang") and "ing" (as in "sing").

Begin these exercises on single tones. Sing "ang-ang-ang-ang" on one tone, seeing that the syllables are connected in an exaggerated legato. Do not sing loudly, but concentrate the mind on the tones, and try to give them an **intense** quality. You will note that the tone maintains a steady underlying "buzz." I have often heard a great Italian teacher of singing say, "When you sing there is felt within you a pressure against some inward spot. The louder the tone, the more intense the pressure. Always lean against that spot, until the end of each phrase."

This pressure is felt within the chest, and this breath pressure or "lean" should be maintained during tone emission. This will cause the steady "buzz" of the tone to be maintained. Nothing is more unconvincing than tones that dwindle away weakly in a meaningless fashion in the middle or at the end of a phrase.

Next, sing short scales, slowly maintaining the intensity of the "buzz" and of the breath pressure against the chest. Sing each note of the scale on a separate syllable—"ang-ang-ang," etc., or "ing-ing-ing." Remember to maintain the pressure and the "buzz" on descending as well as ascending scales.

Acquire a mental conception of all tones, whether high or low, as being of equal ease of production. Never sing a high tone as if it were really high. If the voice does not ascend readily on these scale exercises, aban-

don them, for the time being, and return to the blowing exercises, and to singing “ang” and “ing” on single tones, until the soft palate can easily **adjust itself** for the upper tones.

Add to the exercises already suggested, staccato arpeggios on “hooh” (as in “hoot”), “haah” (as in “hat”) and on “hih” (as in “hit”). Sing these lightly, and with great precision, making each tone as short as possible. Carry these as high as the easier upper notes. The very short space of time required to sing a staccato note, does not give the muscles time to become fatigued as they adjust themselves for each tone.

Never attempt to **force** the voice to the accomplishment of any exercise. Begin the staccato arpeggios in the middle voice, and sing short arpeggios at first, very lightly and carefully. Should any fatigue be felt, abandon these for a time, returning to single

tones "blown" lightly, until the voice has attained the ability to perform the more difficult exercises.

After the arpeggios become easy to sing in the upper voice, practice holding the top tone a little longer than the others. Gradually increase this sustaining period. When this can be done with ease, use the last or descending half of the arpeggio as a separate exercise, beginning on the top tone. Cultivate a mental vision of the light tones being tossed upward with great freedom, and imagine the vibrations of the upper tones filling the upper cavities of the head as the illuminating light of a candle would fill them, if it were raised up behind the soft palate.

When these exercises have been accomplished, the distinction between the light, floating quality of the head register, and the more material, solid quality of the middle

register will be apparent. Practice carrying the light head quality down into the upper regions of the middle register. Sopranos should be able to carry this down to C-sharp of the third space and mezzo-sopranos and contraltos a major third lower.

In the lowest, or chest register, the tones should never be forced into the raucous, blatant, mannish quality adopted by many singers of questionable taste. While this may delight an audience of the "great unwashed," cultivated patrons of music will find it offensive. This practice is almost entirely confined to some contraltos who, as Sims Reeves once aptly remarked, "sing duets with themselves" by alternately singing first like a man, then like a woman.

This type of "yodelling" may be the correct thing in the Tyrolean Alps, but it is highly out of place on the concert platform, the operatic stage, or in the choir loft.

The chest register should be blended with the middle register. Carry down the quality of the middle register, into the upper part of the chest register. A splendid exercise for this purpose is the descending scale of the octave, beginning well up in the middle register and singing downward on "oo" (as in "cool") and on "oo-ee."

The registers should blend into one another so as to be indistinguishable to the listener. The mental vision of the tones resonating at least partly in the head cavities should be identified with all tones, high or low, giving them a delicately "covered" quality. The more the registers are blended, the more will this slightly "covered" quality beautify the tone, without obtruding itself as an individual element, on the ear of the listener.

When the registers are blended, scales and arpeggios on any vowel may be used.

Each singer has a favorite vowel sound—one that lends itself most easily to tone production. Model the placement of the more difficult vowels after that of the easy vowel. (Before practicing exercises on vowels and syllables not already suggested, read Chapter V on "Vowel Formation.")

The mind has a great influence over the voice, and much work may be taken from the muscles and assumed by the mind. To obtain ease of production and eliminate unnecessary physical effort, excellent results may be obtained by mentally picturing the tones of a phrase or a song as if they were really an octave higher than they are written. This is especially beneficial in the case of singers with heavy, unwieldy voices, and of those with a limited range.

In all singing, bear in mind that the singer is merely the **channel** for vocal expression, and not the source. By treating yourself

and your vocal mechanism as a channel, much physical exertion and tension, as well as self-consciousness, may be eliminated.

#### **Men's Voices.**

The greater part of the tones in men's voices lie in the chest, or lower, register. This is the register in which a man speaks, and as he raises his voice to a shout the lower register is still used.

In bass voices the chest quality should predominate as high as C of the added line above the bass clef, in baritones to and including D, in tenors to F. These limits are approximate and whenever effort is experienced near these notes, the upper quality should be blended with the lower or chest quality.

Although the chest tones may easily ascend to the notes just stated, the upper voice quality should be carried down into the top

notes of the chest voice. A tenor should be able to carry the upper quality down to C-sharp of the added line above the bass clef, and basses and baritones should be able to carry it down to A of the top line. Moreover, a pure unmixed chest tone should never be sung. Every tone should have a certain amount of "upper resonance," as it were, even the very lowest tones in the voice.

In singing in the upper part of the voice, and as the voice ascends the scale, a "covered" quality should be cultivated. This is the result of the resonance in the head cavities and increases as the voice ascends and more and more of the breath column enters the nasal cavity.

The use of the "mechanically" or "locally" covered tone, produced by forcing up the lower register, with the soft palate held rigidly, so high as to shut off the nasal passage entirely, is a common and danger-

ous substitute for the use of the upper register. This is a process much in vogue with men teachers who have never sung with their own upper register.

Many a baritone or bass, or even a tenor with a limited range, uses the chest-voice adjustment in his upper voice. The tones sung in this manner may have been sufficient for the teacher's own singing career, which may not have demanded the higher tones of the upper voice. With this as a working hypothesis, the teacher forces all voices up by the same method, being unaware of the delicate adjustment necessary to placing the few tones of the extreme upper voice.

To produce the tones of the upper register, which, Garcia states, is the remnant of the middle register of the boyhood voice, the soft palate must be lowered slightly, just enough to allow part of the air column to

flow up behind it into the nasal cavity. This results in a sensation of great freedom in the upper voice, and eliminates the painful "palate-y" quality so commonly heard.

Many students are told, "Sing your high tones forward." This frequently leads to a misconception. The high tones should apparently float upward back of the soft palate, and the student should mentally picture them, going forward toward the locality of the nose, after they have reached the upper cavities. Some successful teachers use the expression "getting the tone over," as though, for instance, the tone were like a ball which is thrown upward and after first ascending almost perpendicularly, begins to curve forward on its course, having surmounted some obstacle in its ascent. The higher the tone, the more is it directed toward the perpendicular as the air column floats up back of the soft palate.

Practice the "blowing" exercise and "blowing the tone" on "oo." Also sing syllables "ang" and "ing" on a sustained tone. Ascending scales on the syllables "ang" or "ing," singing a separate syllable on each tone should be used; by tenors up to F-sharp or G of the upper voice, and by baritones and bases to E-flat or E. These should be sung but a few times during each practice period. A light but intense tone should be used, and the "buzz" of the tone and the "chest lean" should be continuous throughout each scale, both in ascending and descending. The directions given in the preceding pages for singing "ang" and "ing" and "oo" and "ee" exercises apply equally as well to men's as to women's voices. If the student fears cultivating a nasal "twang," remember that there will be none if the nasal passage is left open and free.

Also practice scales on "oo" (as in "cool") and "ee" (as in "free"). Sing

scales first on one vowel sound, then on the other. Then sing scales alternating “oo” and “ee.” Blend the vowels into each other, keeping the voice placed in the same “track,” as it were, on both vowels. Do not sing these scales too high at first, nor for more than three or four minutes at a time. Alternate these with “ang” and “ing” exercises to adjust the soft palate.

The “octave leap” is a difficult exercise that had better be attempted only under the guidance of a teacher who understands and sings, or has sung with the real upper-voice adjustment. Sing a tone on the vowel sound “ee” in the middle voice and then, as it were, “toss” the voice lightly to the octave above, singing the sound “hee” on a tone of feathery lightness, almost suggestive of falsetto, and absolutely without force. Slur the syllable down the full octave to the note first sung, seeing that the tone is not falsetto, but a light but true tone.

The higher tones should not be forced up with the chest-voice adjustment, but should be developed from the light "mixed" tone of the upper register, which should be carried down to the upper limits of and blended with, the lower register. A singer should be able to sing the upper chest tones with either the chest or upper register adjustment.

In beginning study, tenors should, for a considerable time, sing a colorless and light, but intense, tone. A smiling expression of the face (not a broad grin, however) lightens the tone, relieves tension and tends to widen the space between the pillars of the fauces. This latter action assists the soft palate in dropping slightly, when the upper tones are sung.

## CHAPTER V.

## Vowel Formation.

One of the greatest operatic baritones France ever produced—certainly the greatest of his generation—once said to the writer, “When the vowel is sung in its purity throughout the range of the voice, the tone is produced correctly.” As he sang on this principle, no doubt this was the reason that he had an “old man’s voice” at the age of forty-four. Great singers do not necessarily sing perfectly.

Vowel formation is a much more serious problem than might appear at first thought. The lips and tongue should be used with freedom in enunciation. **Let the vowels form themselves** on the lips and **let the tongue contribute its natural assistance**. Do not force the tongue down. The back of the tongue will be highest on “ee” and propor-

tionately lower on each of the other vowels. Allow the tip of the tongue, as much as is possible during enunciation, to rest lightly against the lower teeth.

In the lower part of the voice the vowel should be pronounced plainly as in speaking. As the voice ascends every vowel should be slightly neutralized, and the higher the tone, the more should the neutralized vowel be used.

The reason of this is apparent. In the lower part of the voice, the breath is directed almost entirely through the mouth; consequently practically the entire breath column passes through the organs of diction, the lips, which are assisted by the tongue. However, as the voice ascends, the breath is directed less and less through the mouth, and more and more toward the perpendicular, as the air column flows upward back of the

soft palate into the nasal passage. Consequently, the tone, as it ascends, becomes separated from the organs of diction, to a greater or less degree.

Were the singer to attempt the absolutely pure pronunciation of the vowel on a high tone, it would be done by diverting the breath column from its natural course, and by forcing it toward the lips. This would result in a pure vowel formation,—but a badly squeezed tone.

The vowel on the ascending tones and in the upper voice should be neutralized so carefully as not to appear distorted to the audience.

A leading tenor of the Chicago Grand Opera Company, once explained his system of neutralizing the vowel to the writer in a very simple manner. "I begin neutralizing the vowel," he said, "in the middle of my voice. I try to give to each vowel a tinge

of the nondescript vowel sound in the word 'Her.' For instance, in singing Rudolph's Narrative in 'La Boheme' I do not sing the 'ah' sounds in the first phrase of 'Che gelida manina' in a flat, white, uncultivated manner as so many Italian tenors do. Nor do I give them the dark, tight-throated American sound. I sing each vowel as if it had something of the vowel sound of the word 'Her.' As I sing higher I increase this neutralization."

As the vocalist sings higher, the lower jaw should drop freely, as of its own weight, and the corners of the mouth should expand, making a spacious, and free opening. Cultivate the feeling in the back of the mouth of "making space" for the tone. A smiling expression about the eyes, and a general alertness of facial expression, will be of assistance in vowel formation.

The writer never allows his pupils to vocalize on the vowel sound "ah" as it is usually sung in America. In the usual instance a more throaty or "flat-tongued" and distressing sound is rarely found.

The Italian "ah" is successfully acquired by two methods. One is to sing at first on the free sound of "aah" as in "hat" and later, to darken it into its proper beauty. The other is to practice on the sound of the short "u" (as in "hut") and holding this sound on a tone, to drop the lower jaw until the neutralized sound of "ah" is being emitted. This latter method is especially recommended for high tones.

There are two manners of producing "ay" (as in "day"). One is closed, approximating "ee," the other open, resembling "aah" as in "hat." The latter is preferable as it is produced by a more open mouth and more freedom of throat. The

tongue is high at the back but not as high as on "ee." Use a free dropping of the lower jaw as the voice ascends.

In singing "ee" (as in "feel"), as the voice ascends, the vowel should be neutralized to resemble the vowel sound in "hit" and the lower jaw should be gradually dropped. At the same time the feeling of making a space in the back of the mouth should be mentally visualized. Remember that the back of the tongue is highest on "ee" and do not try to force it down. Instead cultivate a free dropping of the lower jaw, directing the breath column upward behind the soft palate with a mental vision of impinging the tone behind the nose. Descending the scale, return to a pure "ee" sound.

The diphthong "I" (as in "hide") is a combination of "ah" and "ee." The rules for the formation of the vowel sound "ah"

apply here. Do not elongate the "ee" sound which completes the diphthong. The main stress should be on the "ah" sound and just before the diphthong is finished, a very short sound of "ee" or "ih" (as in "hit") should complete it. In singing a portamento on this diphthong, let the voice make the portamento on the "ah" of the diphthong.

"Oo" (as in "cool") should be "blown" with the lips rounded and free. As the voice ascends the lower jaw should be dropped slightly, changing the vowel sound to a rather closed sound of the short "oo" (as in "cook"). On descending the scale, the vowel again becomes purer until, on the lowest notes it is again the pure "oo" sound (as in "cool"). This should be done very gradually so that the neutralization may not obtrude itself on the listener.

“O” forms itself like “ah” with a decidedly rounded mouth. Do not elongate the slight “oo” sound that completes the English “O.” In the Italian “O” there is no trace of the “oo” sound.

In other diphthong sounds, let the stress be on the first vowel sound of the diphthong.

## CHAPTER VI.

**Daily Practice.**

Many voices are ruined because of over-work. Some students feel, as soon as they begin study, that they should develop the voice as fast as possible. As a result they wear their voices out by long periods of ignorant vocalizing.

During the first months of study, the student should practice but little, for his knowledge must, of necessity, be so slight as to be practically useless for detecting bad tone production. If the student is with the teacher three times a week, or oftener, it is well to refrain from all practice for a time, until the fundamentals are well grasped. After this, periods of practice of five minutes each, with rest periods between, three or four times daily will be sufficient for a number of months.

The student should begin each period of practice, by first assuming the correct body position. Above all things, avoid a swayed back and its companion fault, a protruded abdomen. Begin with the "blowing" exercises," then "blowing" single tones. Next sing scales and arpeggios; never sing them too high. Let the upper tones develop quietly. The phrases of a song on which the student may be working should complete the practice period. Make it a rule to stop practice at any part of the practice period should there be the slightest suggestion of vocal fatigue.

In practicing songs first memorize the words, to gain the thought the writer wishes to express. Then repeat the words in the tempo of the music, giving each syllable its proper time value. When the song has been learned in this manner it may be sung.

The student should always stand while practicing.

In conclusion, let the writer say that no one should begin the study of singing unless he or she is prepared to work **quietly** and **patiently**, and to await the development that nature will surely effect, if her laws are followed. Let vocal study and practice be a part of the daily routine, regular, calm, not indulged in too long at one time, and never feverish, as if attempting to force the voice into premature bloom.

Intelligently seek out a good teacher, one who understands the voice itself and who has been trained to teach singing as well as to handle his own individual voice; not one who has a bag full of hide-bound rules called a "method." See that your teacher is, or has been, a singer and that he understands, has used, or can use, and can illustrate the adjustment for the upper voice.

Avoid the teacher who makes you, in your singing, reveal distinct registers and the breaks between them. The capable teacher who acknowledges the existence of registers, does so only for the purpose of blending them until they cannot be distinguished from one another.

Do not over-practice, think a great deal, and do not exchange ideas with other students, who usually know no more than yourself. To be a singer requires Voice, Brains, Correct Training and "Backbone" (Stick-to-it-iveness).

The last word—study to become a good musician.





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